effects on regional peace and security. It has been generally acknowledged that the Palestinian question is at the core of the Middle East problem. Admittedly, it is not easy to resolve a conflict which is not only a clash over territory, but also a clash of rights and memory, a struggle between nationalist mythologies. The Middle East cannot be allowed to continue to be a cemetery of missed opportunities.

That the Palestinian question remains unresolved more than half a century after the original United Nations partition resolution is an indictment of the international community. The Security Council, which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should live up to its role and use its creative energies for a comprehensive and fair solution to this conflict. Otherwise, peace and security will continue to be elusive in the Middle East.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): At the outset, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on the assumption by the brotherly country of Ghana of the presidency of the Security Council this month. We are certain that, under your able leadership, the Council will spare no effort in addressing the many critical issues that are before it at this time.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the delegation and the Permanent Representative of France for their wise and capable leadership of the Council last month, during which the Council repeatedly convened and held consultations to address the dangerous crisis prevailing in the Middle East, particularly with regard to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the situation in Lebanon.

Today, with a fragile ceasefire in place and with United Nations Member States assembling a force under the supervision of the Security Council for the purpose of bringing security and stability to southern Lebanon, we are witnessing the Council — despite a month's delay — carrying out its Charter responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by taking these immediate, necessary and concrete measures.

I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari for his briefing.

In this regard, I would be remiss if I did not express the continuing hopes and appeals of the Palestinian people and their leadership that one day soon the Council will also act in a concerted and concrete manner to uphold its responsibilities towards the question of Palestine by taking the measures necessary to bring an end to the grievous violations and breaches of international law, including international humanitarian law, that continue to be committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The Council has the requisite authority to act, and it is its fundamental duty to act appropriately to address those crises and issues that pose a threat to international peace and security and to exert every effort in that regard for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The situation of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, should be no exception. Indeed, there is no doubt that the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which has been the question of Palestine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has been the source of almost every threat to peace and security in the Middle East for decades now; the loss and suffering continue to mount to this day. We thus reiterate our firm belief that the Council will ultimately play its rightful role and uphold its resolutions vis-à-vis the question of Palestine, leading towards the ultimate resolution of this prolonged and tragic conflict and of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

In this regard, I wish to highlight the fact that the Arab Foreign Ministers, in their last three meetings, in Cairo, Beirut and Cairo, respectively, determined, in the light of the recent negative developments and the grave deterioration in the region, to work seriously towards bringing the issue of the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, back to the Security Council. Members will recall that during the ministerial meeting of the Security Council on the situation in Lebanon (S/PV.5511), the Foreign Minister of Qatar officially announced that the Arab countries would request a high-level meeting of the Security Council in September to discuss the situation in the Middle East, including the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, with a view to moving in a practical way towards the implementation of the Council's relevant resolutions designed to resolve this

conflict through the achievement of a final, just and comprehensive peace settlement.

At this time, the Arab countries, via the League of Arab States, are in the midst of carrying out the necessary consultations and groundwork aimed at bolstering the potential for the success of this intended exercise, and we are hopeful that there will be wide support on the part of the international community in this important endeavour.

The decision to return to the Security Council — despite the Council's repeated inability to take the necessary actions to address the situation in the Middle East, particularly in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and its failure to uphold its numerous resolutions in this regard — has been taken on the basis of a belief in the responsibilities and the rightful role of the Council in international relations with regard to peace and security and the upholding of international law.

Moreover, it is clear that the peace process in which we have been engaged for 15 years now, beginning with the Madrid Conference in 1991, has not fulfilled its stated goals, as it has been repeatedly hampered by delays, stalemates, gross violations, cycles of violence and major crises. Most regrettably, this peace process, on its various tracks, has not brought an end to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory or of the Syrian Golan or of parts of southern Lebanon. Our part of the world continues to suffer violence, loss and despair as a result of this continuing military occupation and a never-ending series of violations of international law, including military aggression and attacks.

For Palestine, instead of the dramatic improvement anticipated in the situation on the ground and in the lives of the Palestinian people, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, has steadily and gravely deteriorated during those years in all aspects — political, security, economic, social and humanitarian. Israel, the occupying Power, has continued — even during the most productive years of the peace process — its fervent, unlawful campaign of settler colonialism in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in particular in East Jerusalem, confiscating more and more Palestinian land, building and expanding more settlements, and more than doubling the number of its settlers in the territory.

In addition, Israel has now nearly completed the construction of a wall it has been building on confiscated land in the occupied Palestinian territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, that is severing the territory into several isolated and walled enclaves and cantons, destroying numerous communities in their entirety, destroying the livelihood of thousands of Palestinians and displacing thousands more, and further entrenching Israel's illegal settlements. The wall, along with the settlements and Israel's hundreds of checkpoints and roadblocks, is destroying the contiguity and territorial integrity of the Palestinian territory, isolating occupied East Jerusalem from the rest of the territory, devastating the Palestinian economy, destroying the very fabric of Palestinian society and taking us further away from the possibility of actually achieving the two-State solution.

In addition, the Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation continues to suffer declining economic and social conditions as a result of Israel's ongoing military campaign of aggression, as glaringly witnessed in recent months, with its lethal and violent assaults against the besieged population in the Gaza Strip. That military campaign has involved, inter alia, the occupying Power's deliberate use of excessive force, resulting in the killing or injury of hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including women and children; the terrorizing of the population; the continuation of extrajudicial killings; the vast and wanton destruction of vital infrastructure, properties and institutions of the Palestinian Authority; the detention and imprisonment of hundreds of Palestinian civilians — now totalling more than 9,000 prisoners in Israeli jails; and the collective punishment of the entire population.

All of this, in addition to the financial crisis imposed on the Palestinian Authority in recent months following the January 2006 elections, has caused a dramatic decline in economic and social conditions and has resulted in a grave humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory that continues to this day.

Since I addressed the Council on 21 July, Palestine has sent eight letters to the President of the Security Council detailing some of the grave breaches committed by the aforementioned occupying Power. Those letters also listed the names of the Palestinians killed since the last time we met here in the Council. The numbers are shocking. More than 105 people have been killed, including 22 children, and over 600 have been injured, many critically. In one single day during

that period, the Israeli occupying forces killed more than 20 Palestinians, including two infants, a 4-year-old baby girl and a 9-year-old girl, and injured more than 80 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

On another front, more than 3,400 Palestinians are now internally displaced and have sought shelter in United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) installations, as a result of the ongoing Israeli military aggression in the Gaza Strip. This is due mainly to the fact that hundreds of families living in neighbourhoods in Gaza were forced to flee their homes in terror after receiving threatening telephone calls from the Israeli occupying forces telling them they had only a short time to abandon their homes. There is no doubt that this new tactic of psychological warfare has caused panic and fear to spread among the Palestinian civilian population, which already suffers from severe psychological trauma as a result of Israel's brutal occupation.

To highlight just one tragic incident, a 3-day-old infant girl, Shahd Al-Eid, fell from her mother's arms as the latter was fleeing, seeking refuge from a "pre-warned" Israeli missile attack. The infant was later pronounced dead as a result of internal bleeding and bruises.

Indeed, it is a situation that continues to deteriorate as a result of the occupying Power's unlawful policies and practices, as we are witnessing in its daily raids and deadly attacks in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in Gaza; the continued arrest and detention of Palestinians, including numerous elected officials of the Palestinian Authority; the continued closures and the imposition of severe restrictions on freedom of movement, and the continued destruction of property.

In that regard, it is important to note that the elements of the recently vetoed draft resolution concerning the situation in Gaza continue to be relevant, for there has been no cessation of hostilities, no withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces to their original positions outside Gaza, no release of detained elected officials, and no repair of the vital infrastructure destroyed by the occupying Power — all necessary elements for paving the way for a resumption of negotiations.

Overall, the prevailing situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of Israel's illegal practices and measures, has compounded not only the suffering and misery of the Palestinian people but also their frustration, desperation and anger, intensifying appeals by the Palestinian people and by the Arab world as a whole that real and immediate action to be taken to address this ongoing injustice, which has continued for far too long. Thus the decision by the Arab countries, at this very critical juncture in the Middle East, to return to the Security Council seeking redress is based on the consensus Arab position that the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the question of Palestine, should revert to the Security Council and that the Council should exercise its responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security and assist the parties to reach a just and comprehensive solution.

In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to the two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and the terms of reference of the peace process, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map. We therefore reaffirm once again our strong hope that very soon the Council will meet at a high level to undertake serious and concrete actions towards the long-desired achievement of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole and, thus, the achievement of peace, security, coexistence and prosperity for all the peoples of the Middle East region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): I have listened very carefully to my Palestinian colleague. Strangely, some key words were ominously missing from his statement. There was no mention of Hamas, terror, Qassam rockets or the abduction of Corporal Gilad Shalit. I truly believe that, when discussing the question of Palestine, the members of the Council deserve better.

While we are greatly concerned about the situation in Palestine, we feel it would be wrong to divert attention from what the Council has so intensely been engaged in over the past month, namely, the situation in Lebanon and the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). This is our foremost responsibility and we must commit all our efforts to making it happen. However, as a lot has been said in the Council about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, I

would like to inform the Council that we, too, are very conscious of the humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip. I received word only this morning that 3,772 truckloads of food, medical equipment and other supplies have already entered Gaza in the past two months. 664 empty trucks have left Gaza with the intent of returning full with new supplies. All this has been done in close cooperation with the United Nations and with the international community's representatives dealing with these humanitarian issues.

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari for his briefing. The reason we are here today, however, goes back many years — far beyond this report. Six years ago, Israel withdrew all its presence from southern Lebanon, fulfilling its obligations to the international community as outlined in resolution 425 (1978). Six years ago was the time for action, when everything we have discussed today and in the past month could have been avoided.

There were other opportunities along the way. Resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006) also outlined the plan for a new reality in Lebanon, which was clear in its call for Lebanon to exercise its control over all its territory and govern just as would be expected of any other responsible State. The unconditional implementation of those resolutions could have prevented the events of the past month. But the willingness to implement the resolutions was wanting. As a result, Lebanon found itself hijacked by evil and occupied by terror.

All the while, Israel found itself in an intolerable situation. Just over its northern border with Lebanon a state within a State continued to grow, unchecked by the Lebanese Government. And so Hizbollah grew monstrously, spreading its claws throughout Lebanon and amassing large caches of weapons, thanks to the backing of neighbouring Syria and Iran, its evil sponsors.

On 12 July 2006, Hizbollah blatantly violated the Blue Line and crossed into Israel. In the process, it killed eight Israeli soldiers and abducted two others. Israel, like any other State, has the right and duty to defend its citizens from Hizbollah's attacks — and it did so. Over the past month, the peoples of Israel and Lebanon have had to pay a heavy price.

Resolution 1701 (2006) is an opportunity — perhaps the last opportunity — to rectify the mistakes of the past and usher in a new reality. Resolution 1701 (2006) is our best chance for reversing the corrosive decay of Lebanon and all that came with it — Hizbollah, a state within a State, and its masters, Syria and Iran, whose President denies the Holocaust while preparing the next one and openly calls for the destruction of Israel and for wiping it off the map, while acquiring the capabilities to do so.

We trust in resolution 1701 (2006) to create a new Lebanon free of such terrorizing occupiers. But there are obstacles to implementing the resolution, and those issues raise serious concerns. We must join forces in order to overcome them.

Allow me, Mr. President, to highlight some important points from resolution 1701 (2006). The first is the crucial issue of the abducted soldiers — Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. We are facing here a grave humanitarian issue. Each day that passes without their release is crucial. Israel views the immediate and unconditional release of those soldiers as the primary backdrop to the creation of a new reality on the ground. Each one of you, by raising your hand, has pledged to work for their release. We urge you to fulfil that responsibility.

The second point is the strength and composition of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). A clear and unequivocal mandate needs to be outlined for UNIFIL — one that its donor countries can achieve. With a clear and effective mandate, countries contributing to the robust UNIFIL force can commit wholeheartedly and without hesitation.

UNIFIL must have not just the manpower but also the willpower to help the Lebanese Government reach this new reality. At the moment, UNIFIL's strength is uncertain. A weak UNIFIL does not fulfil the interests of Lebanon or the region, and it writes Hizbollah a blank cheque to continue to do as it pleases.

UNIFIL's manpower should reach 15,000 troops, so that its presence can be felt in the areas deployed. It must be a robust force, comprising quality, professional and well-trained troops. UNIFIL must also be geographically distributed. At the 15,000-troop mark, it should be able to spread itself across southern Lebanon, in parallel with the Lebanese army. Beginning south of the Litani River, UNIFIL must be seen and felt.

The Lebanese army's deployment in the south is a welcome contribution. Since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), we have witnessed encouraging meetings between Lebanese commanders and the Israel Defense Forces. But we have also seen Hizbollah terrorists disappearing into the shadows, with no definitive action taken to prevent their re-emergence.

That brings me to the third concern. The rearming of Hizbollah is a blatant violation of the ceasefire. The embargo is the cardinal instrument of resolution 1701 (2006). There is no doubt that Syria and Iran wish to rearm Hizbollah and prevent the emergence of a new Lebanon. Giving them the opportunity to rearm Hizbollah will have catastrophic ramifications for the region and the world. If we cannot enforce an embargo, we send a message to the terrorists and their State backers that we will permit them to continue their ways of terror.

In order to prevent that, mechanisms are needed to surveyist the Syrian-Lebanese border and to monitor the Lebanese seaports and airports. UNIFIL needs to be there, but a policy that addresses how States can enforce the embargo also needs to be articulated. In the absence of enforcement powers, Hizbollah, Iran and Syria will laughingly continue to ignore the embargo, as they are at this very moment.

An embargo does not mean merely preventing arms from crossing the border; it also means putting an end to Syria and Iran's manipulation of Lebanon and its people. During the recent fighting, Israel captured a 22-year-old Hizbollah terrorist by the name of Hussein Ali Suleiman, who admitted to having undergone extensive training in Iran, along with many other Hizbollah terrorists. Other Hizbollah terrorists in Israeli custody have disclosed that Iranian Revolutionary Guards visited their fortified positions along the Israeli border.

If Lebanon asks the Security Council for help, the Council must be willing and able to step forward and give Lebanon a hand. The task of creating a new reality in Lebanon is too important to be the sole work of one State. And, as history has shown us, neglecting to implement the resolutions adopted by the Council comes at all too high a price.

The Middle East is a region caught between rifts of extremism, where radicals engage in fierce battles that have no rules of play. Israel finds itself lodged between those currents, trying to navigate a peaceful solution to the turmoil and allow civilization to grow and prosper as it should.

While our attention has largely been focused on the north, on Lebanon, Israel has also been attacked from the south — by Hamas, operating in Gaza. Regrettably, the forces of extremism have taken hold there as well, and Gaza today is a haven for terrorists and their unsanctioned activities. Indeed, if unchecked, it may be a preview to the next Lebanon.

Hamas has also abducted an Israeli soldier. It has been two months since Gilad Shalit was kidnapped by terrorists who crossed from Gaza into Israel. Along with his abduction, terrorism has continued, including the launching of Qassam rockets at southern Israeli communities. These rocket attacks impose an intolerable situation upon Israel and place its citizens in constant danger.

But there is a way to a new Palestinian reality as well. It begins with the immediate and unconditional release of Gilad Shalit. It begins with a halt to the Qassam rockets and terror attacks. It begins with an end to all forms of terror and with the uprooting of terrorists who wilfully endanger the region.

Israel has been blanketed from north to south by these forces of extremism, by Hamas, Hizbollah, Syria and Iran — the quartet of terror — whose evil knows no bounds. This quartet of terror must be defeated. It is a threat not just to Israel, but to the entire world and to civilization as we know it. The implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) is a first step towards defeating that threat.

The outcome of the next few weeks and the months ahead is ours collectively to decide. The Security Council, representing the international community, possesses that power. Where will we go from here? Will we succeed in implementing these resolutions? Will we succeed in implementing them quickly? Will we work together as partners to enforce an embargo and put an end to the poisonous Syrian and Iranian influence in the region?

These are the questions with which we are being tested. Resolution 1701 (2006) is, indeed, a test: a test for Lebanon, a test for the Security Council, a test for the international community. If we do not pass this test, we will have lost our chance — perhaps our last chance — to free Lebanon from the forces of terror and bring about a new reality.

We can pass this test, but it cannot be done by any one of us alone. We must partner together and become a unified force and a unified voice on terrorism, on extremism and on the forces that threaten the way we live. We must grasp this opportunity.

Resolution 1701 (2006) can be our success story. It can be the story we tell to our children and grandchildren when we recount this region's complex history. It can be the story we take pride in as the defining moment when we rose to the occasion and did not let the terrorists seize power over us. Resolution 1701 (2006) is that story. But it remains the duty of the international community and of the Security Council to ensure that it comes true.

The President: I now call on the representative of Norway.

Mr. Brenik (Norway): Norway welcomes and strongly supports resolution 1701 (2006). We strongly encourage the parties to do their utmost to maintain the cessation of hostilities and transform it into a lasting ceasefire. We support the Secretary-General in his view that the recent Israeli military operation in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon is in violation of the cessation of hostilities, and we urge all parties to refrain from further actions that undermine resolution 1701 (2006).

Our main priority must be to achieve a long-term solution based on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). Norway fully supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to find ways to implement the resolution. The international community must follow up with political support and with economic and humanitarian contributions.

Norway welcomes the positive steps taken on the ground, including the deployment of the Lebanese army to the south and the parties' coordination with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) on the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces.

While the parties bear the main responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the resolution, we call on all States in the region to contribute constructively towards that goal. The rapid deployment of a reinforced UNIFIL is vital to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The Norwegian Government is considering a contribution to the Force, provided that the conditions necessary to ensure success — in particular satisfactory rules of engagement — are in place.

The humanitarian needs are enormous and are a cause of great concern to Norway. It is imperative that the Lebanese Government and the international donor community identify the humanitarian needs in Lebanon. As a contribution to that effort, Sweden, Spain and Norway have issued invitations to a conference on relief and early recovery to be held in Stockholm on 31 August. Let me add that Norway has already allocated $22 million for humanitarian assistance to the Lebanese people, with an additional $1.6 million to remove oil spills on the coast of Lebanon, and stands ready to contribute to long-term reconstruction efforts in Lebanon.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. The Israeli regime of closures is preventing vital goods from entering Gaza and is hurting the entire Palestinian population. Norway strongly urges all parties to return to the peace process on the basis of the Road Map.

The President: I now call on the representative of Lebanon.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to thank your predecessor, the representative of France. Through you, I also wish to express our great appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to address the Lebanese crisis. In addition, I should like to thank Mr. Gambari for his briefing today.

I am addressing the Security Council more than 10 days after its adoption of resolution 1701 (2006), a resolution that the Council sought with a view to achieving a cessation of hostilities, not a ceasefire, a resolution that did not respond to all the requirements of the Lebanese Government, but nonetheless addressed Lebanese issues and concerns with great seriousness; a resolution that emphasized Israeli withdrawal and international commitment to Lebanese sovereignty, support for Lebanon and respect for its national decisions.

We therefore accepted the resolution, in the hope that it would deter the Israeli war machine and bring an end to its aggression, which has lasted for 33 consecutive days. In that time, Israel has wreaked havoc, killed, displaced and destroyed. In 33 days, Israel has set Lebanon back 30 years, in fulfilment of a promise made by Israel's Minister for Defence. The

aggression has also had an enormous cost in terms of the thousands of persons killed and injured, the imposition of a land, sea and air blockade, the displacement of around 1 million people and the destruction of hundreds of bridges, vital institutions and infrastructure amounting to a loss of between $3 billion and $9 billion.

Despite all of that, the Government of Lebanon has shaken off the dust of war and agreed to the resolution, which called for a cessation of hostilities to which it has been committed since 14 August 2006. Our Government has continued to take a series of fundamental measures and decisions, including the Cabinet's 16 August decision to deploy the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon, with a mandate to maintain security in the area, defend our country's territory and secure the property of our citizens, while reaffirming full respect for the Blue Line and the implementation of all laws regarding any weapons outside the authority of the Lebanese State, in cooperation and coordination with international forces, in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006).

My country, gravely wounded but determined to rise again to restore its sovereignty and security and the safety of its citizens, has committed itself, despite being the victim, to that international resolution and taken courageous and unprecedented measures to act upon that commitment. However, what has Israel, the executioner, done? How has it responded to those efforts? Today, more than 10 days after the cessation of hostilities was declared, we are once again here in the Council to inform its members that Israel is continuing its aggression and its daily violations of resolutions 1701 (2006) and 425 (1978). There were 82 violations of our airspace between 14 and 20 August. Moreover, Israel has maintained its presence in many border areas within Lebanese territory. It has set up checkpoints and has fired bursts of gun and sniper fire against civilians, to say nothing of the explosion of cluster bombs and landmines, which kill civilians, including women and children, and members of the Lebanese army. Such ordnance has been used and planted by Israel since the beginning of its aggression on 12 July — all on the pretext of self-defence and combating terrorism. I should therefore like to stress the following points.

Regardless of the justifications it puts forth, Israel's acts are offensive acts. Regardless of the pretexts offered, Israel's acts are acts of aggression. Regardless of the reasons and justifications, what Israel is doing contravenes international law. More than not enough, on 19 August Israel added to its violations with a land operation deep in Lebanon close to the city of Baalbek in eastern Lebanon, thereby subjecting this fragile calm to great instability and committing an act of aggression against the sovereignty of the Lebanese State. This has prompted the Secretary-General to express his deep concern for the fragile calm that has been achieved, and about the dangers that it might entail in terms of undermining the authority of the Lebanese Government.

In pursuing their efforts to block the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), Israeli officials have informed us of conditions and have vetoed the participation of a number of countries that have declared their readiness to contribute to an enhanced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Israel has also very clearly procrastinated in committing itself to the three phases of withdrawal from Lebanon, namely, by increasing the number of phases to 16. Its Minister for Defence has also threatened us many times with a return to war.

All of that has led us to reiterate over and again that Lebanon, which believes in the principles of the United Nations and looks to the Organization as the basic framework for extricating itself from the current crisis, appeals to the Security Council to work diligently to bring about the following: the establishment and strengthening of a permanent ceasefire through a UNIFIL strengthened with additional international troops; and the immediate and unconditional lifting of the air, sea and land blockade imposed by Israel. The root causes of the crisis should be addressed, including by ending the occupation of the Shebaa farms, securing the release of all Lebanese prisoners in Israeli prisons and convincing Israel to turn over maps of the landmines it has planted on our territory. Finally, we appeal to the international community to continue its vital humanitarian assistance to the many Lebanese in need and to contribute effectively to the reconstruction of Lebanon, a country rich in its capabilities, unique in its diversity and distinguished by its democracy.

Wounded Lebanon today would like to salute the heroic struggle and steadfastness of the Palestinian people. We openly condemn the continuous acts of aggression committed by Israel against that people, including its kidnapping of Palestinian officials, its hindrance of everyday life, its settlements on

Palestinian territory and its construction of the barrier wall.

With all due respect, what is required today is Israel's full commitment to the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) and all other relevant international resolutions, so as to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Mr. Rosengren (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries, Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries, Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association country members of the European Economic Area, Iceland, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2006/670) on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The European Union fully supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to find ways to implement that resolution.

It is now 11 days since the adoption of the resolution and eight days since the cessation of hostilities went into effect. The region has started the process of recovering from the violence of the past weeks. A number of encouraging steps have been taken. We welcome the quick decision of the Government of Lebanon to send Lebanese army forces to the south of the country and its rapid implementation, as well as the beginning of the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

The EU commends the constructive way the parties have been coordinating with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) on the withdrawal of the IDF and the deployment of the Lebanese army. The incidents that have occurred, especially in recent days, demonstrate that the situation is very fragile. Therefore, we strongly encourage all parties to do their utmost to ensure that the cessation of hostilities is maintained and to transform it into a durable ceasefire.

The international community will have to play an important role in contributing to the stabilization of the situation on the ground. We know that we need to move swiftly to deploy the international force in southern Lebanon in order to support the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The new UNIFIL will be a challenging operation. It will have to be different from the old UNIFIL to undertake its tasks successfully. Many EU countries are willing to participate in this common effort to help bring about peace in the region. Some have already made their decision to send troops, while others are considering it.

It is also important that all States in the region play a constructive role in order, first, to contribute to a reduction of tensions and then to be able to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006).

The European Union welcomes the fact that the cessation of hostilities has greatly improved the frequency and quantity of humanitarian assistance. But much remains to be done, and the Secretary-General's report sets out the key priority areas for the humanitarian community during this immediate post-ceasefire phase. It is important that the sea and sea blockade by Israel be soon as possible to allow unimpeded access to Lebanon for humanitarian operations. There has been a large return of displaced people. In addition to the need for aid to meet basic needs of the people, such as water supply and temporary shelter, support is urgently needed in the disposal of unexploded ordnance and the cleaning up of oil spills.

The EU presidency Minister for Development, Paula Lehtomäki, and EU Commissioner Louis Michel were in the region last week in order to assess the situation from an EU point of view. The EU will continue to contribute to the humanitarian relief work. EU aid already committed amounts to €74 million. It is also clear that, when the early reconstruction work starts, the EU will play a role, in close cooperation with the Government of Lebanon and with other international partners. The Stockholm conference that will be hosted by Sweden on 31 August will provide an important forum in which to continue to discuss these pressing issues.

In addition to Lebanon, the situation in the Palestinian territories also remains a cause of great concern for the EU. The humanitarian situation has been deteriorating for a long time, civilian

infrastructure has been destroyed and civilian lives have been lost. These developments continue to pose the risk of further deterioration of the situation in the region. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority need to act to address this situation. The abducted Israeli soldier must be released quickly and unconditionally.

The parties need to return to the peace process on the basis of the road map. An unequivocal commitment by all parties to a viable, independent Palestinian State living side by side with Israel and its other neighbours is a key to stability and security in the whole region.

The EU is committed to promoting a comprehensive peace plan for the Middle East in close cooperation with partners and the countries in the region. There is no military solution to any of the problems facing the people of the region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the Council presidency for this month and by thanking you for convening this debate on an issue that is truly threatening international peace and security.

The war machine of the Israeli regime has continued to destroy the lives and livelihoods of the innocent Palestinian and other people in the region. Not only has that machine of horror and terror continued to perpetrate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Palestine, but it has also inflicted enormous suffering and pain on the whole civilian population in Lebanon for 34 continuous days and nights. The whole world witnessed the horror as the Israeli war machine was used by — and that is the United States — in their desire to create havoc throughout a whole country, despite the tragic human toll.

The unspeakable and brutal bombing campaign by the Israeli regime, as the Secretary-General's report (S/2006/730) indicates, killed about 1,200 Lebanese and injured thousands more, the majority of whom were women and children. Indiscriminate and blanket air strikes aimed at collectively punishing the Lebanese people destroyed or damaged 77,000 apartments and 145 bridges, according to the same report.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also came to the opinion in its report to the Security Council on 18 August that enormous damage had been inflicted on the road and bridge networks, other essential infrastructure and residential housing, with some 900 in the south having been destroyed and thousands more damaged. The further report to the Council by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) indicates widespread contamination by unexploded artillery, airborne munitions and cluster munitions, including in residential areas and public buildings, causing many more civilians and deaths among returnees and hindering the provision of humanitarian relief.

Indeed, the recent all-out war against Lebanon was a clear indication of a pre-existing and ill-intended plan by the Israeli regime, which had already secured the support of its ally — that is, the United States. In the past several weeks, more evidence has emerged supporting that assertion. *The Wall Street Journal* revealed in its issue of 19-20 August that "at least since 2004, the Israeli military had plans in place for possibly attacking Lebanon. It goes on, adding that the Israeli decision "transformed a border shoot-out into a war and virtually guaranteed it would become a crisis".

Nonetheless, once again the Israeli onslaught proved that it is impossible to intimidate the people in the region into submission or to quash their desire to live free from occupation and terror.

In fact, although the latest aggression was successful in laying waste to buildings and civilian infrastructures and in killing civilians, it obviously — as the whole world witnessed — brought about results that were opposite to those that the aggressors had sought. It strengthened the resolve of the people to resist aggression, occupation, intimidation and terror.

The cessation of hostilities, although belatedly offered some relief to the Lebanese civilians and the whole international community, which witnessed the power of Israeli State terrorism hovering over a defenceless country for 34 days. Here, I should put on record my Government's sense of profound frustration over the inaction and the handicap imposed on the Security Council for many weeks, preventing it from fulfilling its primary responsibility — inaction that allowed an entire population to suffer such terrible pain and loss and that proved very costly to the Council's credibility and integrity.

egregious crimes and State terrorism. A case in point is the latest failed terrorist commando raid by the Israeli regime in Lebanon. While its goal was in fact abduction, it was deceitfully portrayed as an effort to foil the transfer of arms to that country.

However, such allegations cannot and will not divert the attention of the international community from the root causes of all tensions in the Middle East, that is, occupation, State terrorism and the aggression perpetuated by the Israeli regime against the countries in the region. Indeed, those few who have tacitly or explicitly supported the crimes of the Israeli regime against the Palestinian and Lebanese people are clearly accomplices in those crimes and should be held accountable for that complicity.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Brazil, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): Mr. President, I would like to start by thanking you for having convened this meeting on the Middle East at such a critical juncture for peace in the entire region. Let me also acknowledge the relentless efforts undertaken by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his colleagues in the Secretariat with a view to promoting peaceful solutions to the crisis in the region. I would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Ibrahim Gambari, for presenting us with an informative update on the situation in the Middle East.

The present crisis in the Middle East poses a renewed challenge to the Security Council as regards the effectiveness of its reaction, its methods of work and its transparency. Once again, the spiralling and unchecked use of force in the Middle East requires the urgent attention of the Security Council. Brazil welcomes the cessation of hostilities in Lebanon and calls upon all parties to abide by the obligations established in resolution 1701 (2006). The parties should refrain from any action that jeopardizes the fledgling truce. They must do their utmost to ensure that the cessation of hostilities holds and is further transformed into a durable ceasefire.

Brazil regrets that the prolonged inaction of the Council faced with a flagrant threat to international peace and security, allowed the conflict to drag on for 34 long days. We also deplore the fact that conflict operations in Lebanon were characterized by the rapidly increasing use of indiscriminate and disproportionate force, causing the death of many hundreds of innocent civilians, the unprecedented displacement of a large proportion of the population and severe damage to essential housing and infrastructure, in open violation of international humanitarian law.

The incident in Qana is deeply disturbing. The observation contained in the Secretary-General's letter that the incident reflects "a pattern of violations of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, committed during the course of the current hostilities" (*S/2006/626, p. 5*) is alarming and warrants further investigation into this matter. Our Government welcomes the setting up by the Human Rights Council of a fact-finding commission to investigate the human rights violations committed during the fighting.

At least seven Brazilian nationals, including three children, perished as a consequence of Israeli military incursions in southern Lebanon. The Brazilian Government launched an unprecedented operation to evacuate approximately 3,000 of our own nationals.

Since the very beginning of the conflict, President Lula da Silva has appealed for a ceasefire and underlined the hope for a negotiated process that could end the hostilities and help bring peace and understanding. President Lula interacted with the Secretary-General and with many other international leaders in order to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Minister for External Relations Celso Amorim visited Beirut on 15 August to consult with the Government, reiterate our commitment to supporting the Lebanese people and deliver a sizeable contribution in medical supplies to provide emergency treatment for thousands of people.

Brazil strongly supports the resolution 1701 (2006) framework for providing the assistance the Government of Lebanon will require to extend its sovereignty and authority throughout its territory, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions and the Taif Agreements, including the calls for the dismantling and disarmament of all militias in the country. We appeal to the countries in a position to help reinforce the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to do so promptly.

Furthermore, we call for the release of the abducted Israeli soldiers and the creation of conditions for achieving a durable solution for the crisis. Particular attention must be paid to the sensitive issue

of the large number of Lebanese prisoners detained in Israel.

Brazil calls upon the international community to continue to lend its support for prompt humanitarian action and for the rebuilding of Lebanon. We all expect that the donors conference to be held on 31 August in Stockholm will accelerate the humanitarian efforts to meet the immediate needs of the civilian population and to gradually phase in a response, coordinated by the Government of Lebanon, that is geared towards recovery and reconstruction.

Brazil does not condone the use of violence to obtain what can be achieved only through negotiation. Non-negotiated solutions do not bring about peace. As a country that firmly believes in dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts, we stress the need for the resumption of a political process involving all interested parties. Brazil is also convinced that stability ultimately rests on the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects.

The Lebanese crisis has made the current paralysis of the Middle East peace process even more visible. It has also highlighted the urgent need to address the underlying causes of the conflict.

As a main goal, the world community should strengthen efforts to create conditions for the resumption of the peace process in the region on all tracks. Within this framework, one of the urgent tasks is the normalization of the situation in the Palestinian territories and the resumption of dialogue between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel. In this connection, the Palestinian political leaders now detained in Israel should be promptly liberated.

Brazil welcomes the decision by the League of Arab States to request a high-level meeting of the Security Council in September, open to the participation of all interested delegations, to address the situation in the Middle East. Brazil stresses the need to put in motion a political process for the development of a strategy with a pertinent timeline to implement the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, as stated in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003). Such strategy should also take into account the Quartet road map, the principle of land for peace derived from the Madrid Conference and the Beirut Arab League Summit decisions.

The international community should seize this opportunity to review the deadlocked Middle East peace process and put an end, once for all, to conflicts that have caused too much suffering and despair over many decades.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): My Government is pleased to see that after 34 days of violent conflict, there is now a ceasefire in Lebanon. As we saw this weekend, however, this ceasefire is fragile. Nonetheless, we are confident that the Governments of both Israel and Lebanon are committed to a true cessation of hostilities. The two Governments understand that both the Israeli and Lebanese people need security and stability above all.

The Government of Canada has already responded positively to the urgent appeal to support Lebanon. On 16 August, Canada announced the creation of a $25 million Lebanon relief fund to respond to humanitarian, early recovery, stabilization and reconstruction needs, in order to help people rebuild their lives. This new fund will build on Canada's previous allocation of $5.5 million to address immediate humanitarian needs. Canada has also actively supported humanitarian agencies to reach civilians in need, including the transport by air of humanitarian personnel and over 140 tons of relief items.

Canada stands behind the Lebanese Government. Reconstruction efforts must ultimately be led by the State — not Hizbullah.

All Member States share an obligation to ensure that resolution 1701 (2006) is respected, including agreements with both Governments on its implementation, and that a full arms embargo is enforced. We all also share a collective responsibility to see that obligations under international humanitarian law are respected by all.

The fundamental challenge ahead is to ensure that Hizbut`h does not regain and does not present an even greater threat to Israel in the future. This body unanimously agreed on a resolution that articulates the necessary elements for a lasting peace. At the centre of that is the disarmament of all armed groups in

Lebanon, including Hizbollah, so that there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State.

This is not the first time the Security Council has dealt with this issue, but it is Canada's hope that, with the unanimous passage of resolution 1701 (2006), it will be the last.

Canada welcomes the Lebanese Government's ordering the deployment of 15,000 soldiers to south Lebanon and its announcement that it will not tolerate other armed groups in its territory. When the Lebanese army, backed by the United Nations, becomes the sole visible armed force in south Lebanon, the positive impact on the region will be great.

Canada is disappointed that Iran and Syria, arms suppliers and financial backers of Hizbollah, have not yet accepted the terms of the resolution. They should not be allowed to spoil the peace.

The Lebanese Government must be strengthened so that it can fulfil its rightful role as the provider for and protector of its people. It is equally important for the Lebanese people to have confidence that their Government is capable of delivering on the key responsibilities of a sovereign State. Countries in the region should support the efforts of this nascent democracy to flourish, without having to compete against resources being sent to terrorist organizations. The international community needs to continue providing humanitarian and reconstruction relief.

(spoke in French)

Lebanon has been at the forefront of international attention, but Canada would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that real and lasting peace in the Middle East is inextricably linked to the search for a viable solution — that is, two States: Israel and Palestine.

Canada supports President Abbas and is following with interest his efforts to establish a broader unity Government. If Hamas is serious about helping the Palestinian people, it must immediately and unconditionally release the kidnapped Israeli soldier and it must commit to the Quartet principles of recognition of Israel, acceptance of international agreements and the renunciation of violence.

In conclusion, Canada is firmly committed to the provision of humanitarian assistance, stabilization, reconstruction and capacity-building in Lebanon, as well as in the West Bank and Gaza. We stand ready to continue to work constructively with other Member States and to try to address some of the key problems with a view to achieving peace and security in the region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Abdelsalam (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States. I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We thank you for having convened this important meeting. We would also like to commend your predecessor, the representative of France, for his efforts last month. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Gambari for his comprehensive briefing.

Israel, the occupying Power, is continuing to defy the will of the international community. The most recent manifestation of that defiance was its attempt last week to insert soldiers deep within Lebanon in clear violation of resolution 1701 (2006). Furthermore, Israel is arrogantly and recklessly continuing its acts of aggression against the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories. The number of victims is growing daily, as is the degree of material damage.

In an unprecedented and provocative challenge to law, legitimacy and legal norms, Israeli forces have abducted and detained dozens of democratically elected Palestinian officials, most recently the Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary-General of the Palestinian Legislative Council, who have now joined ministers and other representatives of the Palestinian people.

Israel's unprecedented violation of the principles of international humanitarian law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions, its murder of unarmed civilians, its targeting of women and children, its deliberate destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and civilian Palestinian Authority institutions, its demolition of houses and its displacement of persons, all give the people of the world, who are observing these actions in shock and sadness, the impression that the Council is completely unable to perform its role of preserving international peace and security. That erodes confidence in the United Nations and can have dire

for hundreds of thousands of displaced persons. The world was rightly distressed by the large-scale violations of basic human rights and of international humanitarian law perpetrated by the aggressor, which did not hesitate to use destructive weapons, some of which are prohibited.

Neither could the world understand why it took so long for the Security Council to put an end to the tragedy, the destruction and the massacre of civilians. The rumblings that we are hearing suggest that, unfortunately, this is not yet over. It is certainly urgent that, in order to avert the risk of further violence, everything be done so that the necessary measures can be taken, including through the strengthening the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, within the framework of resolution 1701 (2006), in order to put an end to Israeli aggression and to restore peace to Lebanon.

If the situation in Lebanon is a real tragedy and a scandal in the eyes of the international community, what can be said of the situation prevailing in Palestine? What can be said of the suffering that the Palestinian people has been experiencing for more than 40 years? What can be said of the secret killings and the massive violations of human rights that the Israeli army is daily carrying out in the occupied Palestinian territories? What can be said about the deplorable living conditions of an entire people deprived of its fundamental rights?

My delegation firmly condemns those repeated ... and unjustified ... violations of human rights. It expresses its grave concern at the occupying Power's continued kidnappings of elected members of Palestinian institutions, most recently the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary-General of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and it demands the immediate, unconditional release of all those who have been kidnapped in defiance of international law and in the face of the protests of the international community.

The force, violence and terror being used against the Palestinian people will not resolve this conflict. They will not address security concerns and will not put an end to the determination of the Palestinian people to build a State of its own and to live in dignity, peace and security. These condemnable acts will only further exacerbate tension and provoke more violence.

It is time for these troubles to come to an end. It is time for the international community to intervene,

first and foremost to protect the Palestinian population from the ferocious occupation, from oppression and from the terror being imposed upon it, and then to bring about peace. Such peace was offered by the Arab Summit in 2000, but that offer was never taken up. It is time for the relevant resolutions of the Security Council to be respected, and for an end to bombings and war in the Middle East region, a region that has for so long sought renewed peace and prosperity.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Hussain (Pakistan): I must first of all apologize for the absence of Ambassador Akram, who is unable to deliver this statement owing to other engagements.

Mr. President, the Pakistan delegation highly appreciates your skilful leadership of the Security Council during this month and welcomes the opportunity to participate in a discussion on the Middle East situation. We listened carefully to the briefing provided by Under-Secretary-General Gambari.

Whatever one's political perspective, it is clear that the Middle East is a region in flames and on the edge of chaos. Last month, the world witnessed 30 days of cruel and unjust war which gave rise to a series of violations of the basic principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

The first of these was the use of disproportionate force. No military provocation by irregular forces can justify a full-scale attack and the destruction of a country whose national forces or authorities had no role in that provocation. We do not condone rocket attacks by Hizbollah which resulted in the loss of innocent civilian lives in Israel. At the same time, there can be no justification for bombardments whose victims were overwhelmingly innocent Lebanese civilians, including children and women. There can be no justification for the wanton destruction of the cities and infrastructure of a vulnerable country that was in the process of reconstructing itself from earlier conflicts and invasions into a peaceful, prosperous and democratic polity.

Secondly, the war witnessed gross and consistent violations of international humanitarian law — in Qana, in Tyre and in Beirut.

Thirdly, it witnessed what clearly appeared to be deliberate attacks against United Nations peacekeepers, in which four were killed. We trust that this will be fully investigated.

The fourth and most serious matter was the failure by the Security Council to discharge its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security. The world watched helplessly for 30 days as the bombs and rockets continued to rain down and kill innocent people.

The laboriously negotiated resolution 1701 (2006) was a better outcome than earlier proposals presented to the Council. It envisaged Israeli withdrawal, upheld Lebanon's sovereignty over all its territory and called for reconstruction. Yet, it was not the Security Council's finest hour. After 30 days of war, the Council's resolution could only call for a cessation of hostilities that was unequal and incomplete. The peace that has returned is fragile. It has been violated by one party, taking advantage of the ambiguity in resolution 1701 (2006). Similar ambiguity also plagues the plan to reinforce and redeploy the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). One thing is certain: the United Nations should not be expected to accomplish what could not be imposed by the resort to war. It is the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon, and of its armed forces, to establish its sovereignty over its own territory.

The international community must contribute actively to providing urgently needed humanitarian help to the Lebanese people, including food, shelter and fuel supplies. The naval blockade, combined with the destruction of Lebanon's land communications system, is a major impediment to humanitarian relief. The blockade should be lifted immediately. Lebanon's reconstruction too must be quickly accomplished, with the generous support of the international community. Pakistan will make its due contribution to Lebanon's reconstruction and revival.

It is also clear that this 30-day war has changed the strategic and political landscape in the Middle East. Perhaps the most far-reaching provision of resolution 1701 (2006) is found in its penultimate paragraph, which calls for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

It is absolutely clear, now more than ever, that none of the conflicts in the Middle East can be resolved by recourse to the use of force. Disproportionate military power cannot ensure the durability of a peace that is imposed against the will

aspirations and rights of a people. Even if put down once, they will rise and rise again in the legitimate quest for justice.

Clearly, the root cause of the Israeli-Lebanon conflict, the root cause of the Palestinian resistance and the root cause of suicide bombings and rocket attacks is Israel's 38 year occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab territories. The visible and often brutal suppression of the Palestinian people is also a principal root cause of the rise of extremism across the Arab and Muslim world and of the resort to terrorism. That political reality, however unpalatable, can no longer be ignored.

The structure of a durable peace in the Holy Land is already well known: the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders. To realize that vision, the Security Council must secure the non-selective implementation of its own resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the provisions of the Arab peace initiative and the Quartet's road map.

The most urgent task is to halt the violence in Gaza and the West Bank, both Israeli attacks and Palestinian rockets. The captured Israeli soldiers should be released, but Israel must also release the hundreds of Palestinians and Lebanese it holds, including many Palestinian ministers and parliamentarians. We hope the Palestinians will be able to unify their Government and security forces. We call on Israel to halt and reverse its settlement activity on the West Bank, to stop the erection of the separation wall and to end the economic and humanitarian blockade of the Palestinians. We urge the resumption of peace talks, without prejudice to the positions of either side. Those talks should lead to early agreement on a phased implementation of the agreed peace plan and the road map.

A parallel peace process should be revived between Syria and Israel and should lead to Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights and to a peace agreement.

No one can fail to note that today the problems affecting the Middle East extend beyond the area of the old Palestine Mandate. The peaceful resolution of the sectarian violence and the insurgency in Iraq requires cooperation on the part of all Iraqis, Iraq's neighbours and the international community.

It is Pakistan's hope that the peaceful resolution of the disputes in the Middle East will not be further hampered by arbitrary deadlines or precipitate action on other problems in the area. That could throw further fuel on the fire in this already inflamed region.

The President: I now call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We listened very attentively to the briefing by Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, on the longest-running conflict on the United Nations agenda: the Israeli-Arab conflict, which is as old as this international Organization. We also listened carefully to the statements made by our colleagues, the representatives of States members and non-members of the Security Council, who were unanimous in emphasizing the central importance of establishing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East region on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. They were also unanimous in stating that the Palestinian question is the core of the Israeli-Arab conflict, not one of its details, as the Israeli representative tried in vain to suggest.

We are gravely concerned that the issue of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories continues to be on the United Nations agenda month after month and year after year without the implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy aimed at putting an end to that blood-drenched occupation, which has continued for decades. That makes the United Nations, including the Security Council, responsible and accountable in the eyes of the peoples of many developing States, who find it difficult to understand the total lack of relevance to the effective mechanisms of the Charter and the inability to fully implement the will of the international community as represented in resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), adopted 39 and 33 years ago, respectively. In fact, those resolutions have not been implemented on the ground because of a super-Power's blind support for the continued Israeli occupation and aggression. As all members are aware, that support is expressed in the United States delegation's use of the right of veto 43 times in the Security Council to protect Israel so as enable it to shoulder its responsibility to implement resolutions of international legitimacy.

In the unanimous view of the international community, Israel's continued occupation of Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian territories is the real reason for the instability, lack of peace and escalating tensions in our region. The suffering of our peoples caused by the continued Israeli occupation and by a super-Power's support for that occupation — including providing it with the most sophisticated means of military murder — has become intolerable.

World public opinion has become aware of the magnitude of the Israeli State terrorism that for decades has targeted the Lebanese and the Palestinians. World public opinion has also become aware of a strenuous efforts made by a super-Power's politicians to obstruct the adoption of a draft resolution that would have achieved a ceasefire early in the Israeli aggression against Lebanon, and of the fact that, prior to that, the Permanent Mission of that State exercised the right of veto against a draft resolution condemning the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli-Arab conflict, which is an issue that threatens international peace and security, goes to the heart of the responsibilities of the Security Council. Israel's aggression against the peoples of the region and its occupation of our territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon cannot be concealed by the Israeli representative's efforts to transform that aggression and occupation into a 1950s Hollywood epic. Within the past two months, the Human Rights Council in Geneva, by an overwhelming majority, adopted two resolutions condemning the human rights violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, in Palestine and Lebanon. The Human Rights Council adopted those resolutions in the first two special sessions it has held since its inception.

The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2006/670), which comprises 65 paragraphs in 13 pages, mentions my country only twice, and then in positive contexts: first, when the Secretary-General states that 107,000 Lebanese displaced persons who sought refuge in Syria because of the recent Israeli aggression have returned to Lebanon; and secondly, when he refers to the assistance provided by Syrian authorities to Lebanese refugees in Syria. However, the Secretary-General's report mentions Israel by name dozens of times and indicates that it has violated resolution 1701 (2006), which the Security Council adopted only a few days ago. Indeed, the Secretary-General points out that Israel violated resolution 1701 (2006) several times only hours after its adoption.

The fact that the United Nations has adopted more than 1,000 resolutions condemning Israel by name and calling on it to put an end to its occupation of Arab territories in Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, to halt the building of its illegal settlements on Arab territories, to put an end to the continued Judaization of Arab Jerusalem, the burial of nuclear wastes in the occupied Syrian Golan and its continued disregard for the July 2004 advisory opinion of International Court of Justice and for General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 regarding the building of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territory; all of that shows that Israel and its politicians are demons of international terrorism and hotbeds of falsehood and hypocrisy.

In that regard, it will suffice to state that, as everyone knows, the terrorism committed in 1996 by Israel in the first Qana massacre claimed the lives of 104 Lebanese civilians who had taken refuge in the headquarters of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). That act of Israeli terrorism permanently disabled 25 Lebanese children. However, Israeli terrorism did not end there. In the second Qana massacre, earlier this month, Israeli terrorism was responsible for the deaths of those 25 handicapped children. Is that terrorism not demonic?

Those who provide the requisite support for Israeli terrorism — including absolute support for colonial settlement, occupation, aggression, the construction of the wall, the abduction of the members of a Palestinian Government elected through Western democratic standards and the arrest of the Speaker of the Palestinian parliament to try him before an occupying authority without legitimacy — bear the brunt of responsibility for the escalation and tension in our region. Our people, along with peace-loving people throughout the world, will not permit the transformation of our suffering and pain resulting from Israel's occupation, aggression and terrorism to become Hollywood spectacle from time to time. Although our option to choose peace is a strategic one, if it does not produce results, resistance will be the alternate option, as President Bashar al-Assad recently announced.

The peoples of our countries are not responsible for the failure of the policies of certain States that

consider themselves "super" in our region. We are surprised at the insistence of the capitals of those States on antagonizing our peoples and our peace-loving and open cultures. Fascism, Nazism, apartheid, Zionism and colonialism are neither Arab nor Islamic products. We as Arabs and as Muslims have participated in the writing of the most beautiful pages of human civilization. We have even invented some of the most important means for developing this civilization, in the service of all of humankind. Therefore, in our history we have never known the blind hatred exercised by some against our peoples and cultures. We regret that, for such hatred only serves to deepen conflict between peoples, rather than to promote dialogue and cooperation.

Israel's building and deploying of eight nuclear reactors — which produce plutonium for the manufacture of nuclear weapons — in an area no larger than 20,000 square kilometres is a terrorist act that the Council must address decisively and promptly. Certain major Powers have been breaching their international non-proliferation obligations for decades by providing Israel with nuclear reactors, heavy water, scientists and nuclear technology. Those Powers should ask themselves about their reckless and irresponsible policies, and oblige Israel to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and place its nuclear facilities under international supervision, with a view to putting an end to Israel's policy of nuclear terrorism in the region.

At their recent conference in Cairo, Arab foreign ministers emphasized the central role of the United Nations in finding a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, in accordance with the terms of reference of the peace process and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, especially resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the principle of land for peace. The Arab foreign ministers also decided to call upon the Security Council to meet at the ministerial level in September 2006 to consider a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict by the Security Council. They did so based on their belief in the need for the Council to assume the responsibilities entrusted to it vis-à-vis the protection and maintenance of international peace and security.

The Arab-Israeli conflict did not begin two months ago with the capture of an Israeli soldier in Gaza and two other soldiers in south Lebanon. It began decades ago and is, alas, as old as this international Organization. It is futile for the representative of Israel, or others, to obfuscate that point. The Arab-Israeli conflict began before Hamas assumed power through democratic elections in Palestine. The Arab-Israeli conflict began before the emergence of Hizbollah in Lebanon as a force resisting Israeli occupation, which has continued on Lebanese territory for 25 years despite the fact that the Council adopted resolution 425 (1978) in 1978.

Why has Israel failed for decades to accept the Arab hand extended to it in peace? What we know in that regard is that every time the Arabs have extended a hand in peace to Israel, the Israeli response has been negative, violent and terroristic. As we know, in the wake of the first Arab peace initiative, in Fez, in 1982, the Israeli response was to send Sharon to attack Lebanon and occupy Beirut. When the Arabs once again extended their hand in peace, in 1996, the result was that Israel once again attacked Lebanon and occupied parts of it. When at the Beirut summit in 2002 Arabs again launched a peace initiative, Israel's response, which came while Arab leaders were still in Beirut, was to carry out the Jenin and Nablus massacres.

Those have been Israel's responses to Arab peace initiatives. That is why we call upon the Council to address the Arab-Israeli conflict decisively and seriously at its upcoming meeting in September, when Arab ministers will be here to discuss the issue with the members of the Council to find a solution in accordance with binding international resolutions.

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 2.10 p.m.